DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 255 976 CS 504 925

AUTHOR Apple Charles G.
TITLE Mentors and Rumor Management: The Case of Bendix.
PUB DATE 4 Apr 85
NOTE 26p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Central States Speech Association (Indianapolis, IN, April 4-6, 1985).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Ambiguity; *Behavior Patterns; Communication Research; *Employer Employee Relationship; *Interpersonal Relationship; *Mentors; *Organizational Communication; Research Needs; Speech Communication
IDENTIFIERS *Rumor Management

ABSTRACT

Mary Cunningham, a Harvard Business School graduate in 1979, received more than 30 job offers from major financial corporations. She accepted a positition as the executive assistant to the Chairman of the Board of Bendix Corporation. By October 1980, she had been promoted twice and held the position of vice president of strategic planning. However, Mary Cunningham was forced to resign after two months of public rumors that her rapid promotions in the Bendix company were the result of a romantic relationship with William Agee, her boss and mentor. The case raises fundamental questions concerning two central areas of communication research: mentor-protege dyads and the management of rumors. First, it is significant that Mary Cunningham reported directly to and only to her mentor, Agee. In that situation she and her mentor were vulnerable to the kind of organizational gossip that is incapable of being proven or disproven. Second, not only did Cunningham's rapid rise attract attention, but the boss seemed to spend an unusual amount of time with her. Participants in male-female mentor relationships must be very judicious in the matter of appearance. As for managing the rumors, Agee's initial comment to the press contained sufficient ambiguity so as to leave additional questions unanswered. His approach to rumor management also reflected his naivete--he underestimated the interest of the press in the rumors. The Bendix case offers clear evidence for additional research and training in the areas of organizational communication. It also raises essential ethical concerns about the ambiguity of behavior. The lessons of Agee and Cunningham apply to every potential participant in any mentor-protege relationship. (HOD)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

[ ] Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED255976

# MENTORS AND RUMOR MANAGEMENT:

# THE CASE OF BENDIX

A Paper Presented

at the

Central States Speech Association Convention

April 4, 1985

Charles G. Apple
Assistant Professor, Communication Dept.
Northern Kentucky University
Highland Heights, KY 41076

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Charles Apple

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS 504 585

## Mentors and Rumor Management:
## The Case of Bendix

Mary Cunningham graduated from the Harvard Business School in June 1979. She received more than 30 job offers from major financial corporations. She accepted the position of executive assistant to William Agee, Chairman of the Board at the Bendix Corporation in Southfield, Michigan. By October 1980, Cunningham had been promoted twice to vice president of corporate and public affairs and to vice president of strategic planning. She was also forced to resign after two months of public rumors that her rapid promotions were the result of a romantic relationship with William Agee, her boss and mentor.

The Bendix case brought together two significant communication variables: the mentor-protege dyad and the management of rumors. Both of these variables are shaded by a third aspect, namely, the fact that this dyad was a male-female mentor-protege relationship. The Bendix case provides an excellent opportunity to examine the applicability of our accumulated wisdom regarding mentors and rumors. Such a test is an important one. Much that has been written about mentors and/or rumors has been based on either descriptive statistical studies or on collections of conventional wisdom. While a formal ECCO analysis[1] of the Bendix case is not possible due to the subsequent breakup of the corporation, a fair test of our theoretical wisdom can be made of this case because of the extensive public attention that it has received.

1

In addition to the publicity, Mary Cunningham has written a lengthy apologia of the episode.[2]

This paper examines the Bendix case from the two fold perspective of mentor-protege dyads and rumor management. It is not the objective of this paper to make a judgement regarding the truth or falsehood of the rumors. Rather, the case will be reconstructed based upon both the record of the media and the oral and written response of Mary Cunningham. The central objective of the paper is to suggest research and training needs for communication scholars based upon the findings of this case. This approach is taken in the spirit expressed by Miller that research in the applied communication arena must be solidly related to communication theory.[3] In that spirit, the paper examines three major topics. First, research in the areas of mentor-protege dyads and rumor management are focused and summarized. Second, the facts of the case are reviewed. Third, the details of the case are related to the theory in order to identify areas in which future research and/or training are needed.

## Research

Mentor-Protege Dyads: Most research in the mentor area has been descriptive in nature. Several studies have documented the value of a mentor-protege relationship. Roche has documented the "vital role mentors play in the development of corporation executives."[4] Harragan stresses that the value is great for the protege. "Your chance of winning the game of corporate politics has just

multiplied one-hundredfold."[5] Building on the assumption that the dyad is a significant one, other studies have focused on the demographic composition of the relationship. Ryan and Friedman have examined the participants and the impact of the dyad in a state government agency.[6] Roche surveyed over 1200 male and female executives with over two-thirds having experienced the assistance of a mentor.[7] A few studies have specified female participation in the dyad. Collins received over 400 responses to her mentor questionnaire. Her findings confirmed several values of the relationship for women. A mentor gives "upward mobility," boosts self-esteem, provides advice, counsel, and support, introduces the protege to the corporate structure, teaches by example, and provides performance feedback.[8] Fitt and Newton interviewed thirty female managers. They reinforced the counseling, caring, reassuring, and career advancement potential of mentors. Fitt and Newton also comment on the potential for mentor-protege relationships to develop into romances. While all of those interviewed agreed that this is a constant danger for the dyad, only three instances were reported in which an affair had actually occurred.[9] The findings of studies such as these have provided an abundance of very specific information regarding the relative positions of mentors and proteges, their career advancement, salary structures, and age ranges. From this research it is clear that there is a very definite and normally positive impact on the career of a protege who has experienced the aid of an organizational mentor.

Where research has been less active, unfortunately, is in

the area of identifying the problems that develop for the mentor-protege dyad and offering solutions to those problems. The single area in which there is some research is in the sensitive area of gender. The research done in this area has tried to determine the impact of cross-gender dyads on the career of a protege, the degree of cross-gender dyads, and the impact of a romantic involvement within the dyad. Hennig and Jardim,[10] Collins, [11] and Fitt and Newton[12] have all confirmed the strong impact of male mentors on the careers of female proteges. While Kanter also confirmed the positive career impact of a mentor-protege dyad, she noted that women tended to be excluded from socialization processes within the organization.[13] On the matter of cross-gender mentoring, Ryan and Friedman found that women tend to provide more stringent forms of mentoring behavior for other women.[14] On the question of romantic involvements, Collins' survey supported the frequency of a sexual relationship developing within the dyad with over 25% of the respondents reporting that their dyads engaged in a sexual relationship.[15] Her research also supports the inadvisability of a romantic involvement in the dyad. Of 357 respondents to the question of sex in the dyad, "all responded 'no'" to the question on advisability.[16] The reasons identified were relatively simple. Sex within the mentor dyad does more harm than good especially when the protege is a woman. Collins identified the "double standard" as a cause for the negative impact. She also addressed the danger of ambiguity. The behaviors of the mentor and the protege can very easily become misinterpreted by other members of the organization.

> There is a lot of speculative judging by the organization, and thus one does need to pay attention to appearances. Travel together, attendance at nonbusiness functions, leaving late at night or arriving together early in the morning can give an appearance that can be counter-productive to one's co-workers. It is important for the mentor and the mentoree to foster understanding among their colleagues as to the nature of the mentor-mentoree relationship.[17]

Some research attention has been paid to solving dyadic problems. Wheatley and Hirsch have identified five symptoms that suggest when the relationship has run its course and they make helpful suggestions for ending the relationship in a productive fashion.[18]

Of the quantity of research in the mentor area, more remains to be done. Almost every topic identified in this discussion requires further work. While the purely descriptive work may seem at first to be superfluous, it must be continued in order to identify changing patterns of mentor-protege behavior. Key questions, however, remain unanswered. What is the best mentor relationship? Should the mentor be your boss? Someone else within the organization? Someone outside of the organization? How should the question of behavioral ambiguity be handled? Should any attention be paid to it, or would that simply give rumors an apparent foundation in truth? What are the best ways to terminate the mentor-protege relationship? Questions like these are critical ones to those involved in this form of an organizational dyad.

Rumor Management: The question of organizational rumors has been extensively researched. Since the seminal work done by Davis[19] and Allport[20] studies of rumor have focused in the nature, role, and channels of rumor within organizations. Three key questions are relevant to the analysis in this paper, namely, the functions served by rumor within the organization, the relationship between rumor and behavioral ambiguity, and the management of rumor.

Studies of rumor utilizing a sociological perspective were reported by Bach in 1983. Bach identifies three functions of rumor.[21] Rumor may serve as a form of social control. Bach refers to the work of Gluckman[22] and Shibutani[23] to explain that rumor serves to establish organizational relationships for newcomers and to clarify organizational moral codes. The second function is to preserve status. Rysman[24] claims that rumor may help a group to legitimize its struggle for rewards. The third function is that of saving face within the organization. This approach, according to Gluckman,[25] enables individuals to evaluate the results of others in the organization without facing them.

Research has established correlation between rumor and behavioral ambiguity. Allport and Postman first isolated ambiguity as a significant rumor related variable in 1947. Their famous formula, $R \sim i \times a$, helped to clarify the relationship.[26] Schachter and Burdick measured the impact of ambiguity within the rumor on the number of exchanges of the rumor. They found twice as many exchanges within the ambiguous message as in the non-ambiguous message.[27] While more work needs to be done on the specific

question of behavioral ambiguity and rumor, it does seem clear that ambiguity does feed the rumormill.

The least work has been in the area of rumor management. Much of the advice that is given to those who must manage rumors is drawn from collections of conventional wisdom. A sample of this wisdom is provided in Frank's textbook for business communications.[28] Barker's work on how to test rumors offers direction,[29] but more research is needed so that practitioners of rumor management will have clearer, more effective guidelines.

## The Bendix Story

In order to relate the basic events of the case at Bendix, source material has been drawn from two primary sources, the media and Mary Cunningham. The description of the case is not intended to take a formal position on the truth or falsehood of the rumors that provoked the series of confrontations at Bendix. Rather this discussion is intended to outline the public events as reported in the media and to supplement the public record with Cunningham's account. Her version of what took place at Bendix is drawn from her recent book, Powerplay: What Really Happened At Bendix,[30] and from her interview by Phil Donohue.[31] The case will be recreated first by describing the principal characters and second by relating the events.

### The Characters

The cast of characters involved in the Bendix story include a series of members in the inner circle at Bendix,

J. Michael Blumenthal, former Chairman of the Board at Bendix, and ranging as far as Ronald Reagan, Gerald Ford, and Paul Laxalt. The primary characters in the Bendix drama were Mary Cunningham, William Agee, J. Michael Blumenthal, William Panny, and David Taylor.

Mary Cunningham came to Bendix from a strict Catholic family background. She describes herself as an introverted, scholarly, saint who carried a personal sense of guilt over her parents divorce. "I vowed from that day on that I would be good, so good that it would make up for this terrible thing I'd done." Such a self-description may serve as much as a rebuttal to the charge that she slept with the boss as an accurate self-profile. In any event her early life history seems to parallel her image as a straight-laced person. She graduated with honors in philosophy from Wellesley. Through childhood and into early adulthood, Cunningham received advice from a mentor named Father Bill, a Catholic priest that was a very close family friend. Her personal life included an interracial marriage (which ended in divorce shortly after her resignation from Bendix). Cunningham worked as a recruiter for the Admissions Board at Wesley and in the corporate credit department at Chase Manhattan Bank prior to attending the Harvard Business School.

William Agee came to Bendix in 1972 after a meteoric rise in corporate life.

> Fresh out of Harvard Business School in 1963, he took a job at Boise Cascade in his native Idaho, and four years later, at age 32, he was made chief financial officer. When

> Boise got in trouble in 1969 and 1970, mostly on account of some misadventures in the real-estate business, Agee survived what he calls "the greatest testing period of my life." In 1972, he left for Bendix at the bidding of its chairman, W. Michael Blumenthal.[33]

Agee succeeded Blumenthal as chairman of the board when Blumenthal joined the Carter Administration as Secretary of the Treasury.

J. Michael Blumenthal was the individual who coaxed Agee into joining Bendix. Blumenthal served as Agee's mentor while Agee served as president of the corporation from 1972 until Blumenthal left to work with Carter in 1976.

> Blumenthal and his family had fled from Germany during World War II and ended up in Shanghai in the Chinese version of a displaced persons camp. He came to the United States just after the war, in 1946, and went to Berkeley and then on to earn a Ph. D. at Princeton. From there, his career was a series of jobs in government and politics. He served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State under George Ball, first in the Kennedy Administration in 1962 and then, in 1963, under Johnson. After a few more years in government, he returned to Princeton, where he taught government.[34]

When Agee met him in 1972, Blumenthal had only four years experience in business. Upon entering the Carter Administration

on January 22, 1977, Agee succeeded him as chairman of the board. By the spring of 1979, Blumenthal left the Carter team and returned to the world of business. Agee did not offer him a seat on the Bendix board of directors.

William P. Panny was appointed president and chief operating officer of Bendix by William Agee. Panny's strength was in the area of corporate operations, an area in which he had proven himself at Rockwell International as executive vice president prior to moving to Bendix.[35] Panny's conservative business philosophy and opposition to Mary Cunningham's influence led to a series of disagreements between himself and Agee. In September 1980 Agee fired Panny. According to Cunningham it was really just a matter of time before Panny resigned or was dismissed.[36]

David Taylor was external director of public affairs at Bendix when the rumors concerning Agee and Cunningham began. He was the principal advisor to Agee and Cunningham concerning the growth of the rumors and the increasing need to do something about them.

The Story

When Mary Cunningham came to work at Bendix in 1979, she entered an intensely political situation. Agee's senior management team gave her clear signals that they did not buy Agee's management style or philosophy. They also gave her clear signals that they did not buy women in senior management circles. Her first encounter with most of the team left her with a single reaction. "I wanted to cry, but God knows women

can no longer cry in corporate corridors."[37] After her series of frustrating and humiliating interviews, she reports that Agee summarized the situation for her.

> "I think I know what's been going on," he said. "Let's see if I've got it right. Jacobson tried to scare you, Svec didn't say a word, Hastie tried to snow you and Donnelly put you off with his warped sense of humor. Right?" I felt a little better knowing it wasn't all me. Still, I wondered how he could run a business surrounded by people like this. "Whom do you rely on?" I asked. "None of them," he said.[38]

According to Cunningham, Agee's dependence on her grew as his frustration with the team increased. Such dependence by Agee led to Cunningham receiving profuse praise for her work efforts in public, while Agee consistently criticized the efforts of the members of his team. In Cunningham's words, "I knew whatever lesson (the team) learned it would be at my expense, and Agee was smart enough to know this too, but this was his blind spot."[39] While it may seem surprising for a "people man" like Agee to have such a blind spot, such behavior contributed to a hostile political situation within Bendix. Within such a climate, the spreading of rumors--true or false--could serve to enable Agee's internal opposition to save face without confronting the chairman of the board. Agee's attitude toward the situation seemed to be one of indifference, blindness, or a naive sense of invulnerability. Bernstein quoted one Agee-watcher. "Says one

man who knows Agee well: "He seems unable to see the consequences of his acts."[40]

Whether in spite of or as a result of the worsening internal climate among the Bendix senior management team, Agee continued to involve Cunningham in more and more high level corporate decision making projects. As 1979 blended into 1980 and the presidential election year mania increased, Agee became prominent in Republican circles as potential cabinet material for the presidential candidate,Ronald Reagan. As Agee was drawn more and more into the limelight, he depended even more on his executive assistant This dependence grew at the same time that his marriage was deteriorating. It was within this atmosphere of presidential politics and broken mariage that Agee was called upon to play host for a great many parties in the weeks leading up to the Republican convention to be held in Detroit during the summer of 1980. Agee called upon his executive assistant to coordinate the parties.

> Those were whirlwind weeks. There were parties day and night. As many Vice Presidential hopefuls as there were--and there were lots that summer--that's how many parties Bendix gave. There were luncheons for George Bush, Gerald Ford, and John Connally, and dinners for Howard Baker and Paul Laxalt. I might have had my hands full regardless, but an event in Agee's personal life doubled my work that month. Diane (Agee's wife) had abruptly left for the summer with the intention of not returning until her divorce was final.[41]

The absence of Agee's wife created a situation that was ripe for behavioral ambiguity. During the parties Agee and Cunningham were the only members of the senior management team that were without spouses. According to Cunningham, William Panny and Diane Agee were responsible for the development and at least initial generation of rumors concerning Agee and Cunningham.[42]

By June 1980, two new developments had occurred that would have an impact on the rumors and on the climate at Bendix. The first development was the appointment of W. Michael Blumenthal as chairman at Burroughs, a Bendix competitor. According to Cunningham, Blumenthal held a grudge against Agee for not having been offered a seat on the Bendix board of directors.[43] The second development was the effort by Blumenthal to woo Bendix vice president for strategic planning Jerry Jacobson over to Burroughs. These two developments marked the beginning of Blumenthal's war on Agee and Cunningham.[44]

It was on June 26, 1980 that Mary Cunningham received her first promotion to that of vice president of corporate and public affairs. In Cunningham's words, she had a lot to learn about corporate politics. "...I began my tenure as Bendix' youngest corporate vice president. I had a lot to learn, but my biggest lesson was one they never taught us at Harvard Business School. It was called Corporate Politics, or who played ball with whom.[45]

September of 1980 was an eventful month for Bendix. It was the month during which a major restructuring of the organization was to be announced and implemented by Agee. It was also the month during which the rumors concerning Agee and

Cunningham began to surface in a serious manner. In early September, Agee was approached by members of the Bendix board of directors about questions raised to them by Blumenthal concerning the nature of Agee's relationship with Cunningham. She had been promoted a second time to vice president for strategic planning. The rumors received additional fuel when in mid September Agee fired Panny. Panny's comment concerning the firing was reported as, "I got between Agee and his girlfriend."[46] Additionally, by Labor Day, word of Agee's divorce was also circulating around the company.

The primary opportunity for Agee to deal with the rumors came at the end of September. His management philosophy involved an annual meeting with all 600 employees at the Southfield headquarters. The annual meeting was scheduled for September 24, 1980. David Taylor urged Agee to respond to the rumors at the meeting. He also urged Agee to invite the press to the meeting. Agee made his first public effort to deal with the rumors at this meeting. One media source reported his comments as follows.

> "I know there have been a lot of questions, there have been a lot of rumors," Agee told his suddenly thunderstruck audience. "I know it has been buzzing around that her rise in this company has been unusual. It is true that we are very close friends and she's a very close friend of my family. But that has nothing to do with the way that I and others in this company evaluate performance. Her rapid promotions are totally justified."[47]

As the meeting was in the process of breaking up, Cunningham was approached by a reporter from the Detroit Free Press.

> "So, how long have you been sleeping with the boss?" he said. "What?" I said. I couldn't believe what I'd heard. "I'm not going to dignify that question with an answer," I said. "Then you're not going to deny it?" he asked.[48]

Agee followed the advice that much of our conventional wisdom regarding rumors might have offered him. He met the rumor head on and in public. While his answer suffered from ambiguity in terms of the exact nature of his close friendship with Cunningham, Fortune Magazine commented that the strategy was ineffective.[49] From September 24 until October 9, 1980, the furor concerning the Bendix rumors continued to grow. On October 9, 1980, David Taylor released an announcement to the press concerning Mary Cunningham. The announcement contained a copy of her letter of resignation, the acceptance letter from the board, and a letter from Agee concerning the matter.[50] The mentor-protege relationship had ended.

## Discussion

In order to properly make suggestions for future research and training, it is necessary to discuss the significance of this case in terms of the Agee-Cunningham dyad and of the rumor management techniques utilized.

Three points must be made regarding the mentor-protege dyad

discussed in the Bendix case. First, it is very significant that Mary Cunningham reported directly to and only to her mentor. In that situation she and her mentor were vulnerable to the kind of organizational gossip that is incapable of being proven or disproven. So much of what they worked on together was undertaken for the most part between the two of them. There were no outsiders capable of being involved on a regular basis. Cunningham has testified to the need for a reporting relationship in which she could be responsible to more than one of the primary executives.[51] A further implication of her mentor also being her immediate supervisor was that she developed a dangerous achievement situation. On the one hand, she so admired and liked her mentor that she strove to over achieve in order to satisfy his needs. On the other hand, as executive assistant in a highly political climate, she was a prime target for anyone who wished to make political points. As she quotes from a fellow employee at Bendix, "It's not your fault; it's the problem with your job. People with titles like Executive Assistant walk around with bull's-eyes on their backs." He left me with one piece of advice: "Limit the time you play Executive Assistant."[52] As a result of her deep desire to achieve for her boss/mentor, it was virtually impossible for Cunningham to limit the time she played executive assistant. If there is a bottom-line comment regarding mentors, then it may very well be to either select a mentor who is not your boss or to seek a relationship in which there is constant and public exposure for the relationship that does not invite behaviorally ambiguous situations.

Second, behavioral ambiguity is a central concern for male-female mentor dyads. Time Magazine described the incriminating facts surrounding the Bendix rumors.

> Not only had Cunningham's rapid rise attracted attention, but the boss seemed to be spending an unusual amount of time with her. They checked into the same hotels on business trips, shared limousines and spent late nights working together.[53]

Such behavior would not be at all incriminating or even suggestive for a male-male dyad in corporate America. However, as Fortune has argued, "the issue might never have arisen if Cunningham and Agee, but especially Agee, had behaved in a way that avoided the appearance of any impropriety."[54] Participants in male-female mentor relationships must be very judicious in the matter of appearance.

Third, a question that may apply to some proteges is the matter of how to break-off the relationship. This concern ties into the specific reporting relationship. When the boss and the mentor are the same person, it is more difficult to either keep the relationship under control or end it.

> The demands of the job were insatiable. I'd try to round out my life, to make plans to see someone for dinner, and then Agee would say, "Mare, I really need you for this one, could you please cancel that?" That was the flip side of mentorship they never told you about at Business School. Once you were mentored,

how did you get unmentored?[55]

Collins' research suggests that the protege keep the mentor informed as to her/his personal responsibilities. "It never hurts to give him a glimpse of that 'other side' of you and let him know what other demands you are balancing."[56]

Two conclusions are appropriate in terms of the rumor management techniques utilized by Agee and Cunningham. First, Agee's initial comment to the press during the September 24 annual meeting contained sufficient ambiguity so as to leave additional questions unanswered. His stress that he and Mary were very close friends seemed to prove that theirs was more than a strictly business relationship. His attempt to draw a line between what occurs within the corporation and what occurs outside of the corporation backfired. He should have been aware that neither his employees nor the outside critics of his actions were receptive to his claim.

Second, Agee's approach to rumor management reflected his naivete. He underestimated the interest of the press in the rumors, He felt that pressure from the board of directors was their way of "doing me a favor."[57] He seemed to be totally oblivious to the political realities that he was fostering. Given the incredible complexity of conditions surrounding the entire case, it is entirely possible that Agee could not have satisfactorily answered the rumors. However, he could have been more aware of the realities involved.

The Bendix case offers clear evidence for additional research and training in the areas of organizational communication. First,

more research is needed on the mentor-protege dyad. The Bendix clearly supports the value of a mentor in enhancing the career of a protege. However, more data is needed in the areas of how to select a mentor, how to relate to the mentor, what to do about potentially ambiguous situations when the members are male-female, and how to terminate the relationship.

Second, more research is needed in order to establish better techniques for handling rumors. The Bendix case confirms the functions of rumor of preserving status and saving face. It seems safe to say that Panny, Blumenthal, and perhaps many others inside of Bendix were able to sustain their political position in part due to the rumors. More research in these areas would help to clarify the value of these functions. Furthermore, additional research could help in handling press attention, in clarifying responses to rumors, and in determining when an answer becomes a matter of protesting-too-much.

A final area of concern is that of training. The basic area that emerges from the entire Bendix case is that of more training in organizational political cultures. Several signs of the need are present in the case. Even with her Harvard education, Cunningham had too little appreciation for the value of reading the boss' mail. As she later commented, "It turned out to be an interesting exercise. It helped me learn a lot about Bendix and more about Agee."[58] Cunningham also comments that she lacked any real instruction in how to handle the press. She astutely points out that at some time in a successful career, you will have to respond to the press. She graduated from Harvard

without ever receiving instruction on communication with the press.[59] Overall, Cunningham pleads her case for more classroom attention to the realities of organizational life.

> I wasn't very savvy when I first went to work for Bendix. Oh, I was intelligent, and like most of my classmates at the Business School, ambitious, but I lacked any real know-ho about how the corporate world operates. What I knew about the world and people I'd learned from reading Plato and Thomas Aquinas. A crash course in Machiavelli might have been more relevant.[60]

The recent trend toward internship programs is a very hopeful indication that communication programs are beginning to move in the direction that Cunningham describes.

The Bendix case is a rich one for students of organizational communication. It raises fundamental questions concerning two central areas of communication research, mentor-protege dyads and rumor management. It also raises essential ethical concerns about the ambiguity of behavior. It should be noted in closing that while the Bendix case involves the highest levels of the organization, the lessons of William Agee and Mary Cunningham at Bendix apply to every potential participant in any mentor-protege relationship.

## Endnotes

[1] K. Davis, "Management Communication and the Grapevine," Harvard Business Review, 1953, 43-49.

[2] Mary Cunningham, Powerplay: What Really Happened at Bendix (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984).

[3] Gerald R. Miller and Michael J. Sunnafrank, "Theoretical Dimensions and Applied Communications Research," QJS, August 1984.

[4] Gerard R. Roche, "Much Ado About Mentors," Harvard Business Review, March-April 1981; 14.

[5] Betty Lehan Harragan, Games Mother Never Taught You: Corporate Gamesmanship for Women (New York: Warner Books, 1977), pp. 380-1.

[6] M. Colleen Ryan and Paul G. Friedman, "Career Mentoring in a State Mentoring Agency," paper presented to the Speech Communication Association, Washington, D.C., 1983.

[7] Roche.

[8] Nancy W. Collins, Professional Women and Their Mentors (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1983), pp. 22-8.

[9] Lawton Wehle Fitt and Derek A. Newton, "When the Mentor is a Man and the Protege a Woman," Harvard Business Review, March-April 1981, 56-60.

[10] Margaret Hennig and Anne Jardim, The Managerial Woman (New York: Anchor Press, 1977).

[11] Collins.

[12] Fitt and Newton.

[13]Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Men and Women of the Corporation (New York: Book, Inc., 1977).

[14]Ryan and Friedman, pp. 16-7.

[15]Collins, p. 121.

[16]Collins, p. 121.

[17] Collins, p. 73.

[18] Meg Wheatley and Marcie Schorr Hirsch, "Five Ways to Leave Your Mentor," Ms, September 1984, pp. 106-8.

[19]Davis,

[20] G. W. Allport and L. Postman, The Psychology of Rumor (New York: H. Holt Co., 1947).

[21] Betsy Wackernagel Bach, "Rumor and Gossip in Organizations: A Review and Analysis," paper presented to Speech Communication Association, Washington, D. C., 1983, pp. 7-9.

[22] M. Gluckman, "Gossip and Scandal," Current Anthropology, 1963, 307-315.

[23] T. Shibutani, Improvised News: A Sociological Study of Rumor (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966).

[24] A. R. Rysman, "Gossip and Occupational Ideology," Journal of Communication, 1976, 64-68.

[25] Gluckman.

[26] Allport and Postman.

[27] S. Schachter and H. Burdick, "A Field Experiment on Rumor Transmission and Distortion," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 1955, 363-371.

[28] Allan D. Frank, Communicating on the Job (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, Co., 1982), p. 148.

[29] L. L. Barker, Listening Behavior (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1971).

[30] Cunningham.

[31] Interview on the Phil Donohue Show, May 1984.

[32] Cunningham, p. 56.

[33] Peter W. Bernstein, "Upheaval at Bendix," Fortune, November 3, 1980, p. 48.

[34] Cunningham, p. 111.

[35] Bernstein, p. 49.

[36] Cunningham, pp. 120-134.

[37] Cunningham, p. 26.

[38] Cunningham, p. 29.

[39] Cunningham, p. 42.

[40] Bernstein, p. 48.

[41] Cunningham, p. 105.

[42] Cunningham, pp. 110, 126.

[43] Cunningham, p. 115.

[44] Cunningham, p. 123.

[45] Cunningham, p. 99.

[46] Cunningham, p. 136.

[47] "Executive Sweet at Bendix," Newsweek, October 6, 1980, p. 79.

[48] Cunningham, p. 144.

[49] Bernstein, p. 53.

[50] Cunningham, p. 177-8.

[51] Donohue.

[52] Cunningham, p. 44.

[53] Robert T. Grieves, "Crying Foul: Mary Cunningham Tells Tales," Time, April 30, 1984, p. 53.

[54] Bernstein, p. 56.

[55] Cunningham, p. 75.

[56] Collins, p. 43.

[57] Cunningham, p. 127.

[58] Cunningham, p. 44.

[59] Donahue.

[60] Cunningham, p. 274.